



## **Planning for Places: The potential for the Ministerial Advisory Group (MAG) to assist the capacity for good design in the local government core strategies of new district council areas.**

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## Architecture and the Built Environment for Northern Ireland

- The MAG is a non-statutory body established in 2007 to advise the Minister and Department of Culture Arts and Leisure (DCAL) on matters of architecture and the built environment.
- The MAG operates “to champion the provision and maintenance of the highest standards of design quality in architecture and the built environment in Northern Ireland.”  
(MAG mid term report 2009)



The MAG's **3 Guiding Principles**

... to improve the achievement of **valued environments through design**



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(Belfast, HS Barton 1860)

**Place.**

Belfast: prehistory settlers on high ground above the valley, self sufficiency;  
middle history settlement within the valley of resources, industry, connections,  
trade





(Belfast, 1600-1900, The making of the modern city, Raymond Gillespie & Stephen Royle 2007)

## Place.

Belfast: today: suburban settlement, central dereliction, services, cultural quarter



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(Belfast Cultural Quarter. Waring Street, Cotton Court  
photo: The Paul Hogarth Company, 2000)



(Belfast Cultural Quarter. Waring Street, Cotton Court. DSD / Laganside  
photo: The Paul Hogarth Company, 2005)





(Belfast Cultural Quarter. Waring Street, Cotton Court, Belfast visitor information website 2010)

If people believe in a place, value and care for it, invest time and resources and management into it... it will endure, always evolving with the priorities of the people.



Place is integral with existence. Events / acts / occurrences  
'take **place**' – meaningless to imagine any happening without  
reference to locality.

Place is **meaningful** space.

To gain an existential foothold, man has to be able to orientate  
himself, know where he is, identify himself within the environment,  
know how he is in a certain place.

Our **life-world** = concrete phenomena + intangible phenomena

**All places have character.**

Christian Norberg-Schulz 'Genius Loci' 1980



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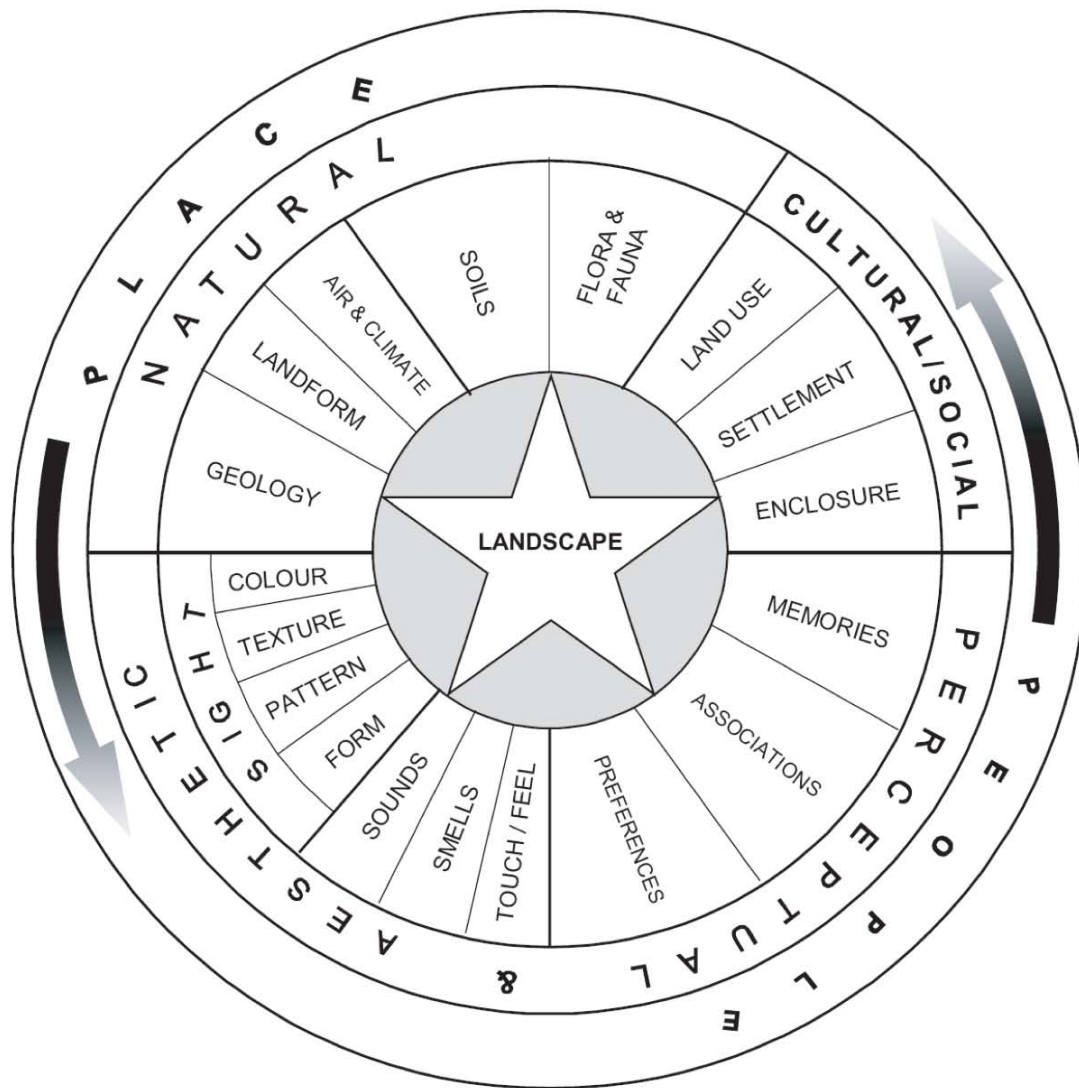


**‘Place-making** is a dynamic human function; an act of liberation, of staking claim and of beautification – it is true human empowerment.’

(**Place diagram**, Project for Public Spaces website 2010).

Place key attributes (inner ring), intangible qualities (middle ring), measurable data (outer ring)





**Landscape** (a condition, a process of interaction)  
 = **people + environment**  
 = lifestyle  
 = identity

Rigorous process of **landscape assessment** (EIA Directive 2000) – combined evaluation of character, natural / geodiversity / biodiversity, HLC (historic landscape characterisation), ecological / habitat survey

Landscape is the resultant of interaction between people and the environment  
 (Landscape Character Assessment Guidance, SNH & Countryside Agency 2002)



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## European Landscape Convention

(Council of Europe 2000) arose from concern regarding lack of distinction between landscapes. States required to:

- **Recognise** landscapes
- Evaluate **change**
- Define **objectives**
- **Implement** these

Measures apply to the whole territory:  
**all landscapes matter.**

‘it concerns landscapes that might be considered outstanding, as well as everyday or degraded landscapes’

**European Landscape Award:** to exemplify the integration between landscape / identity / place + community.

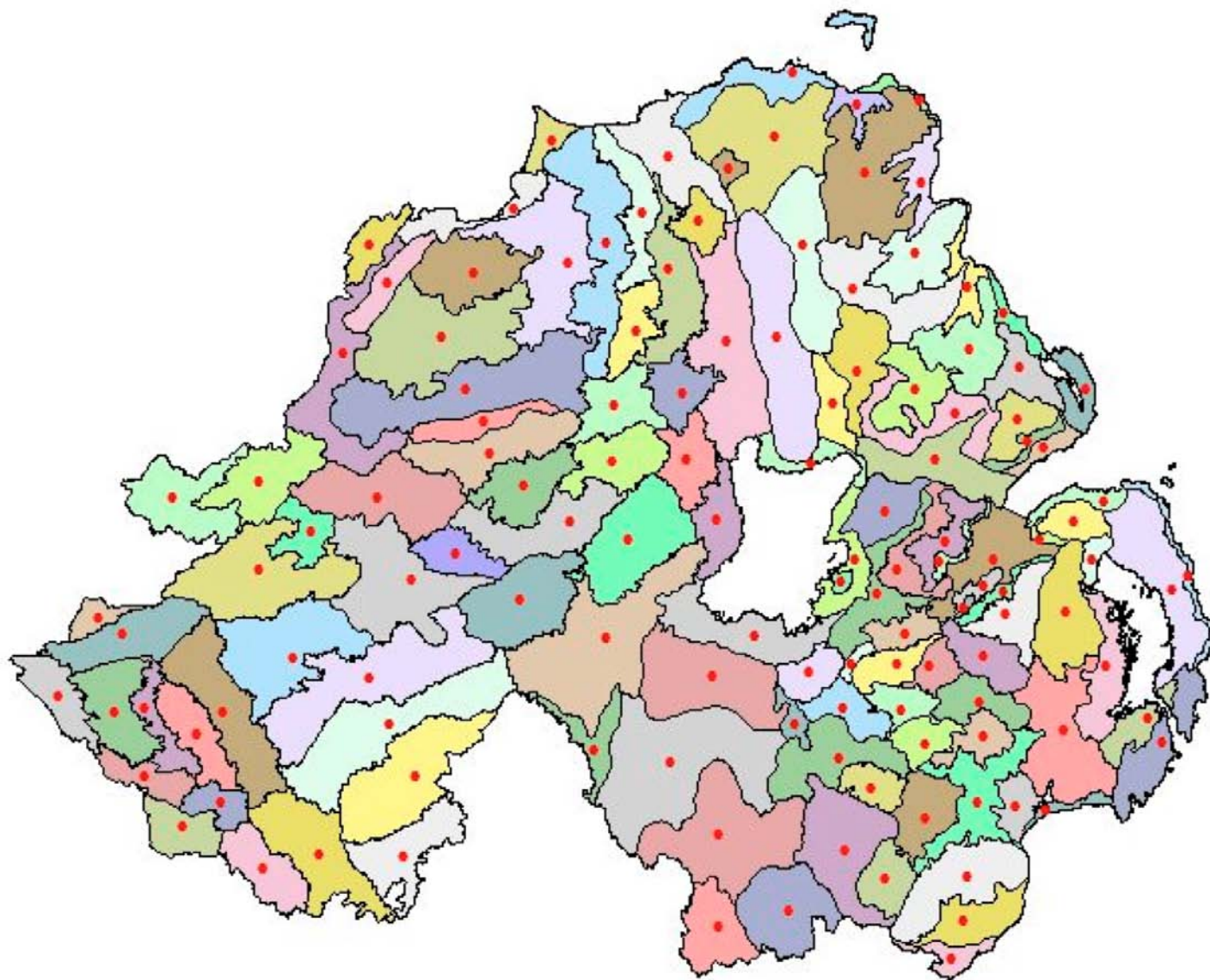
The **ELC** is a unique treaty with a powerful vision – to put landscape at the centre of place-making across Europe. (Val Kirby, Natural England 2010)



(Parc de la Deule, France,  
European Landscape Award winner 2006)







Northern Ireland was the first UK country to effect **Landscape Character Assessment** for whole region.

The NI LCA comprises: description, evaluation of **condition, value, sensitivity, & change, principles for management.**

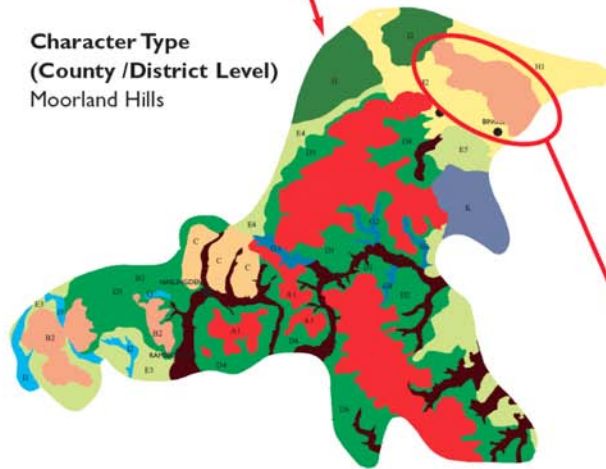
Very useful planning resource, but not necessarily encompassing local commitment to **quality objectives and vision.**

Map showing the 130 Landscape Character Areas in Northern Ireland assessed by ERM for NIEA and Planning Service in 2000, each area is weblinked to its landscape, geodiversity and biodiversity profile. (NIEA website 2010)



**Character Area  
(National/Regional Level)**  
Joint Character Area 36 - The South Pennines  
(from *The Character of England*)

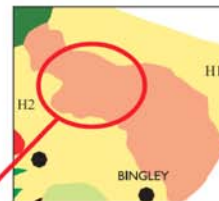
**Character Type  
(County /District Level)**  
Moorland Hills



**Character Types  
(County/District Level)**  
South Pennines Landscape

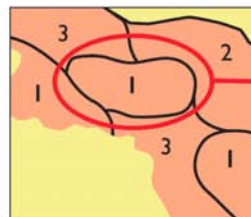


**Character Area  
(County /District Level)**  
Rombalds Hills



**Character Types (Hypothetical)  
(Local Level)**

1. High Moorland Tops
2. Grassy Moorland Fringes
3. Complex Moorland Mosaic



**Character Area  
(Hypothetical)  
(Local Level)**  
Rombalds Top

159 LCA in England  
30 LCA in Scotland

Each LCA uniquely distinguishable

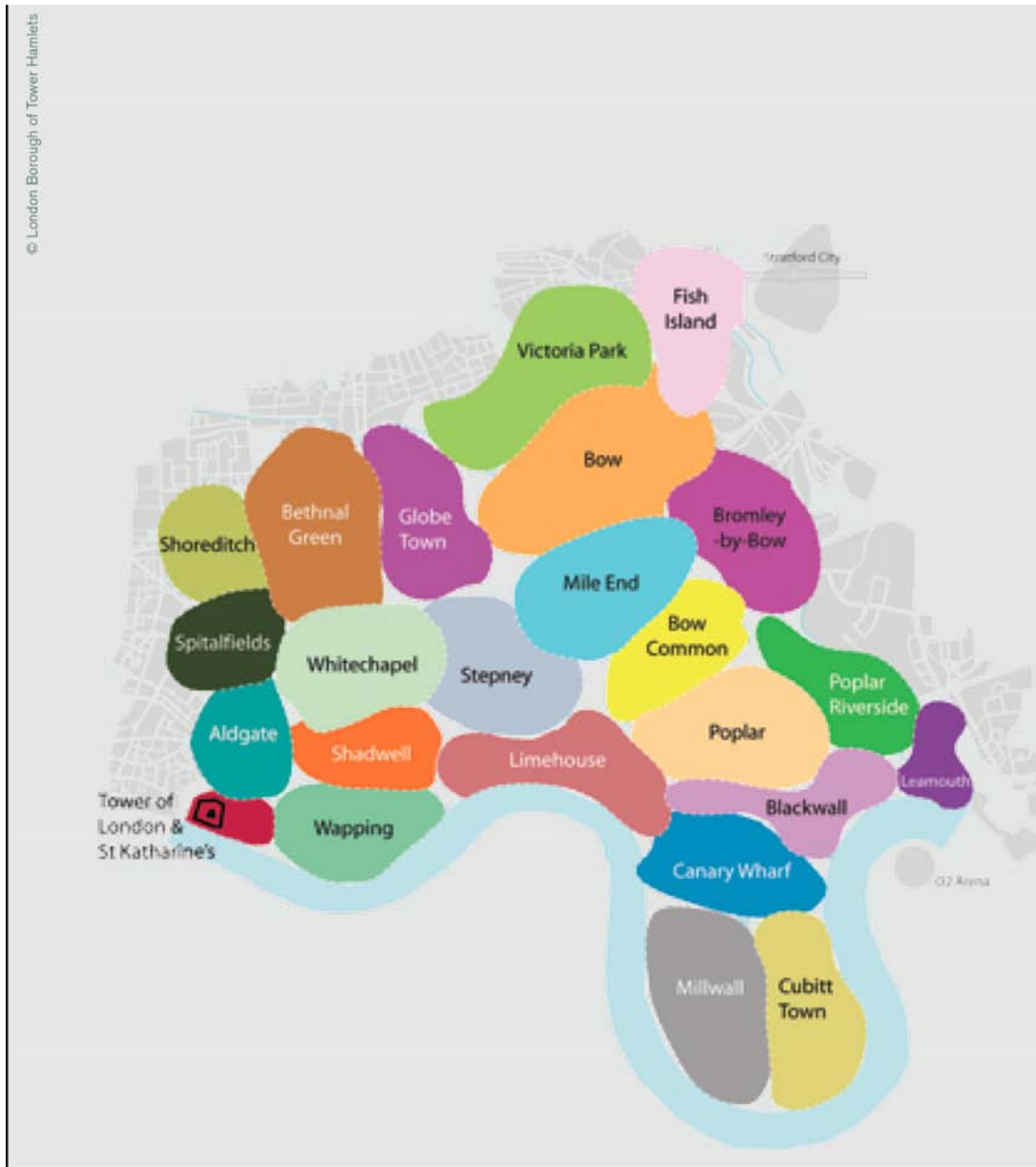
Landscape Character Assessment spatial hierarchy – example of the relationship between the levels from national to local.

**Local assessment of LCAs** are carried out in England by local county authorities and continually updated.

(Landscape Character Assessment Guidance, SNH & Countryside Agency 2002)







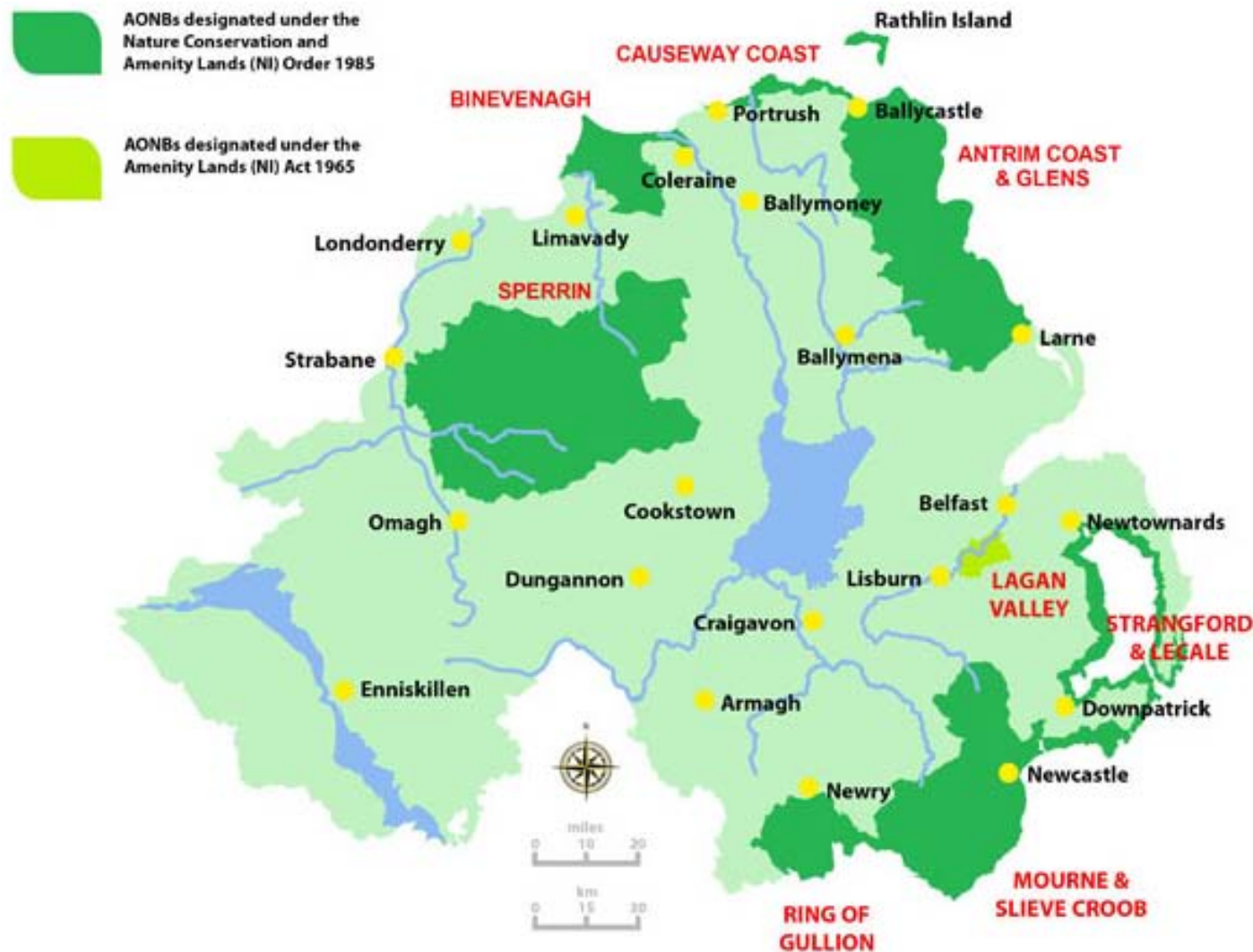
The 24 places which shape Tower Hamlets  
(**Planning for Places**, CABE 2009)

**Ordinary Places** are where 80% of the people lives (where our future citizens are being formed). (CABE 2010)

Council planning teams are encouraged to **identify and describe places**, and establish **visions and quality objectives** for them.  
(Planning for Places CABE 2009)



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Core strategies operating for the achievement of valued environments:

1965 designation of AONBs, no special planning restrictions (although concurrent pre-PPS21 with special planning control)

1985 enablement of management capacity, trusts established in Mourne and Causeway Coast and Glens

No 'place-vision with management' outside these areas

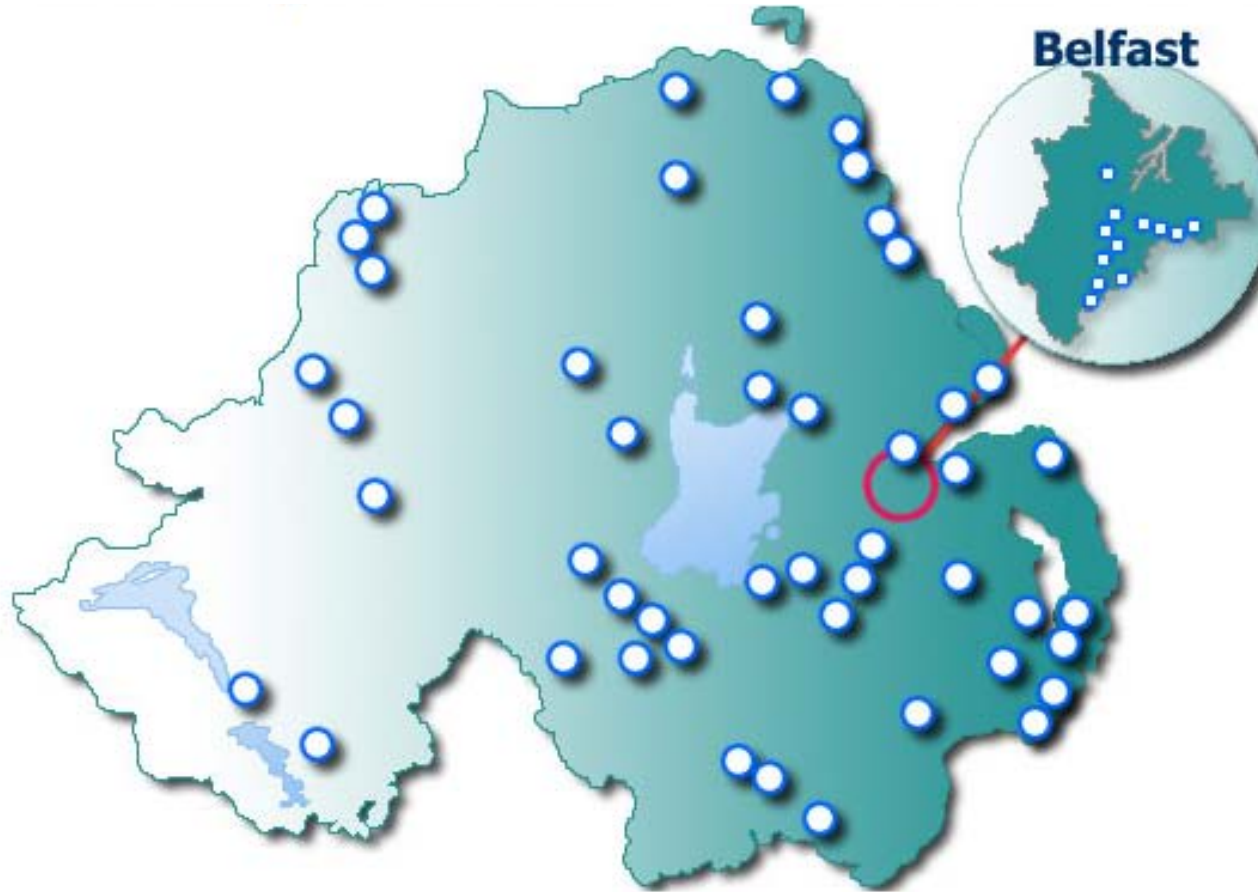


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Northern Ireland's regionally special landscapes  
– 8 **Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty**  
(NIEA website 2010)

## Conservation Areas: Map of all Areas

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Within planning policy:

Conservation Areas established to protect built heritage (within which PPS6 applies)

Generally accompanied by a design guide published by Planning Service.

No 'protection' outside these areas

Northern Ireland's regionally special areas of built heritage  
– 60 **Conservation Areas**  
(Planning Service website 2010)





### Place description:

- Rolling plateau
- Deeply incised glens
- Rugged coastline
- Remote Rathlin
- Stone field patterns
- Traditional farming
- Archeology
- Distinct culture + music + folklore + sports
- Diverse economy / tourism

### Management framework issues:

- land coast and sea
- historic environment
- sustainable communities economy, tourism

Specifically addresses: **use, management, benefit, change**

**Antrim Coast and Glens AONB**  
(Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust, 2009)



## *Carnlough Design Guide*



Department of the  
ENVIRONMENT

**Carnlough Conservation Area** Design Guide  
(Planning Service website 2010)

### **Place description:**

- 2 storey tightly packed domestic buildings
- narrow streets, collective character, compact grouping
- some individual features

### **Design guidelines:**

- scale
- vertical treatment elevation
- building line
- roof pitch, material, detail, chimney, eaves, gutters
- windows, sills
- materials
- doors
- extensions
- colour
- shopfronts, signs

All **aesthetic or material** issues.  
No mention of usability, or change



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the **place-communities** of Belfast City

Management and design  
vision, objectives and  
framework  
for community places which  
embody community usability  
necessary to sustain vital  
places.



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“The key challenge for the future is to identify how our landscapes can provide all the things we need, such as food, timber, clean water, space for housing, sites for commercial and business development and renewable energy, places for wildlife, places to escape, places that are distinctive and links to our cultural heritage.

The ELC provides a way of translating these challenges into opportunities. **By encouraging a people-focused, integrated way of engaging with landscapes everywhere, the convention increases the likelihood that local people and community groups can shape the best possible future for themselves and their landscapes.”**

Val Kirby, Natural England 2010

## Locally initiated planning

*place-community ... community-place*

*No place like home... (no home like a real place) (DCfW 2010)*

**Homes and Communities Agency:** 'Place Spotlight – for improving and integrating communities'. The components of great places = the components of sustainable community development

Local LCAs in England are encouraged by local authorities to set up community groups, which are encouraged to establish **Parish Councils** and formulate a parish plan, or **Village Design Statement**, for their local LCA.

- the vision for how your local community wants to develop, and identifies the actions needed to achieve it
- includes everything that is relevant to you
- up to your local community to decide what is important
- **not about whether development should take place (which is the purpose of the local plan) but about how development should be undertaken.**

(Maldon District Council, 2010)



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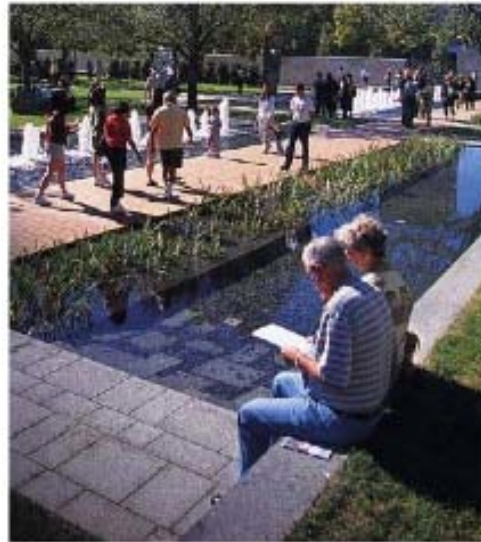
## Value through Design

- *Green infrastructure*
- *Ecosystem services*

### CABE priorities for **Sustainable Places**

- manage **energy** demand
- manage **waste**
- manage **water**
- manage **transport**
- + built environment (housing, schools, hospitals etc)

Integral in **green infrastructure + public space**



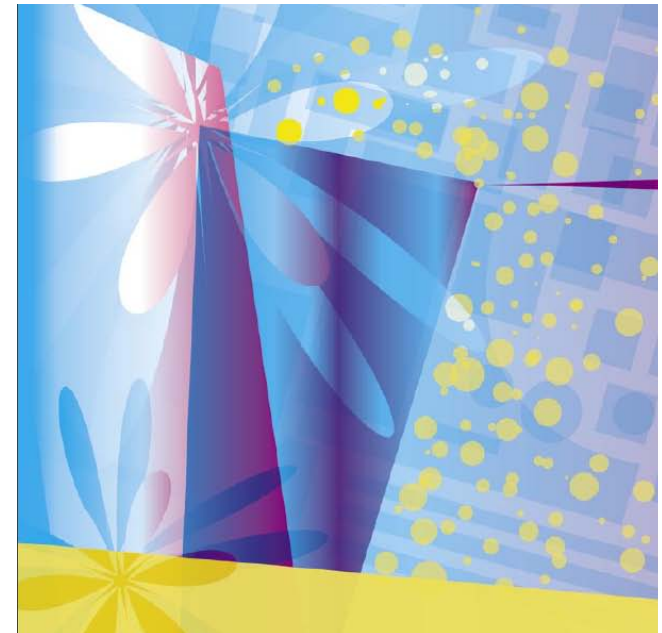
Connswater Greenway, The Paul Hogarth Company  
Dalmarnock, Glasgow, Whitelaw Turkington

MAG objective 4.11: 'to encourage local councils to promote quality in architecture in their areas'

The MAG wishes to **engage with local councils** throughout Northern Ireland, and proposes to coordinate **workshops with each council area** to assist in investigation and evaluation of:

- place and place-community
- gaps and opportunities in core strategies
- quality place vision and objectives

to work collaboratively for the achievement of **valued places (for people) through design.**



*A **community** derives its identity and lifestyle from its **interaction** with its **place**. If that interaction is beneficial to both, both will prosper and evolve. If their interaction causes detriment to one in order to favour the other, that interaction is not sustainable, and both will ultimately suffer. To plan for community or place in separation is non-sustainable of either.*



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